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Preliminaries omitted

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THE ROOMINGHOUSE MADRIGALS: EARLY SELECTED POEMS 1946-1966

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by Charles Bukowski

*Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* (1960)

*Longshot Pomes for Broke Players* (1962)

*Run with the Hunted* (1962)

*It Catches My Heart in Its Hands* (1963)

Crucifix in a Deathhand (1965)  
Cold Dogs in the Courtyard (1965)  
Confessions of a Man Insane Enough to Live with Beasts (1965)  
All the Assholes in the World and Mine (1966)  
At Terror Street and Agony Way (1968)  
Poems Written Before Jumping out of an 8 Story Window (1968)  
Notes of a Dirty Old Man (1969)  
The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills (1969)  
Fire Station (1970)  
Post Office (1971)  
Mockingbird Wish Me Luck (1972)  
Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions and General Tales of Ordinary Madness  
(1972)  
South of No North (1973)  
Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame: Selected Poems 1955-1973 (1974)  
Factotum (1975)  
Love Is a Dog from Hell. Poems 1974-1977 (1977)  
Women (1978)  
Play the Piano Drunk/Like a Percussion Instrument/ Until the Fingers Begin to  
Bleed a Bit (1979)  
Dangling in the Tournefortia (1981)  
Ham on Rye (1982)  
Bring Me Your Love (1983)  
Hot Water Music (1983)  
There's No Business (1984)  
War All the Time: Poems 1981-1984 (1984)  
You Get So Alone at Times That It Just Makes Sense (1986)  
The Movie: "Barfly" (1987)  
The Roominghouse Madrigals: Early Selected Poems 1946-1966 (1988)  
Hollywood (1989)  
Septuagenarian Stew: Stories & Poems (1990)  
The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992)  
Run with the Hunted: A Charles Bukowski Reader (1993)  
Screams from the Balcony: Selected Letters 1960-1970 (1993)  
Pulp (1994)  
Shakespeare Never Did This (augmented edition) (1995)  
Living on Luck: Selected Letters 1960s-1970s, Volume 2 (1995)  
Betting on the Muse: Poems & Stories (1996)

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#### Preface

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the editors of the scores of literary magazines and chapbooks where many of these poems originally appeared. Thanks also to Chris Brun, Special Collections Librarian at the University of California, Santa Barbara for his cooperation. And finally, thanks to Michael J.

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#### Foreword

A question put to me quite often is, "Why do your out-of-print books cost so much?" Well, they cost so much because that's what booksellers can get for them from collectors.

"I want to read your early poems but ..."

I don't even have some of my early books. Most of them were stolen by people I drank with. When I'd go to the bathroom, they did their shit. It only reinforced my general opinion of humanity. And caused me to drink with fewer people.

At first, I made efforts to replace these books, and did, but when they were stolen all over again I stopped the replacement process and more and more drank alone.

Anyhow, what follows are what we consider to be the best of the early poems. Some are taken from the first few books; others were not in books but have been taken from obscure magazines of long ago.

The early poems are more lyrical than where I am at now. I like these poems but I disagree with some who claim, "Bukowski's early work was much better." Some have made these claims in critical reviews, others in parlors of gossip.

Now the reader can make his own judgment, first hand.

In my present poetry, I go at matters more directly, land on them and then get out. I don't believe that my early methods and my late methods are either inferior or superior to one another. They are different, that's all.

Yet, re-reading these, there remains a certain fondness for that time. Coming in from the factory or warehouse, tired enough, there seemed little use for the night except to eat, sleep and then return to the menial job. But there was the typewriter waiting for me in those many old rooms with torn shades and worn rugs, the tub and toilet down the hall, and the feeling in the air of all the losers who had preceded me. Sometimes the typewriter was there when the job wasn't and the food wasn't and the rent wasn't. Sometimes the typer was in hock. Sometimes there was only the park bench. But at the best of times there was the small room and the machine and the bottle. The sound of the keys, on and on, and shouts: "HEY! KNOCK

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IT OFF, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! WE'RE WORKING PEOPLE HERE AND WE'VE GOT TO GET UP IN

THE MORNING!" With broomsticks knocking on the floor, pounding coming from the ceiling, I would work in a last few lines....

I was not Hamsun eating his own flesh in order to continue writing but I had a fair amount of travail. The poems were sent out as written on first impulse, no line or word changes. I never revised or retyped. To eliminate an error, I would simply go over it thus: #####, and go on with the line. One magazine editor printed a group of my poems with all the #####s intact.

At any rate, here are many of the poems from that wondrous and crazy time, from those distant hours. The room steamed with smoke, dizzied with fumes, we gambled. I hope they work for you. And if they don't, well, ##### ## ###.

Charles Bukowski

San Pedro, 10-31-87

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Bukowski, Charles: 22,000 Dollars in 3 Months [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       night has come like something crawling  
2       up the bannister, sticking out its tongue  
3       of fire, and I remember the  
4       missionaries up to their knees in muck  
5       retreating across the beautiful blue river  
6       and the machine gun slugs flicking spots of  
7       fountain and Jones drunk on the shore  
8       saying shit shit these Indians  
9       where'd they get the fire power?  
10      and I went in to see Maria  
11      and she said, do you think they'll attack,  
12      do you think they'll come across the river?  
13      afraid to die? I asked her, and she said  
14      who isn't?  
15      and I went to the medicine cabinet  
16      and poured a tall glassful, and I said  
17      we've made 22,000 dollars in 3 months building roads  
18      for Jones and you have to die a little  
19      to make it that fast ... Do you think the communists  
20      started this? she asked, do you think it's the communists?  
21      and I said, will you stop being a neurotic bitch.  
22      these small countries rise because they are getting  
23      their pockets filled from both sides ... and she  
24      looked at me with that beautiful schoolgirl idiocy  
25      and she walked out, it was getting dark but I let her go,  
26      you've got to know when to let a woman go if you want to  
27      keep her,  
28      and if you don't want to keep her you let her go anyhow,  
29      so it's always a process of letting go, one way or the other,  
30      so I sat there and put the drink down and made another  
31      and I thought, whoever thought an engineering course at Old Miss  
32      would bring you where the lamps swing slowly  
33      in the green of some far night?

34 and Jones came in with his arm around her blue waist  
35 and she had been drinking too, and I walked up and said,

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36 man and wife? and that made her angry for if a woman can't  
37 get you by the nuts and squeeze, she's done,  
38 and I poured another tall one, and  
39 I said, you 2 may not realize it  
40 but we're not going to get out of here alive.

41 we drank the rest of the night.  
42 you could hear, if you were real still,  
43 the water coming down between the god trees,  
44 and the roads we had built  
45 you could hear animals crossing them  
46 and the Indians, savage fools with some savage cross to bear.  
47 and finally there was the last look in the mirror  
48 as the drunken lovers hugged  
49 and I walked out and lifted a piece of straw  
50 from the roof of the hut  
51 then snapped the lighter, and I  
52 watched the flames crawl, like hungry mice  
53 up the thin brown stalks, it was slow but it was  
54 real, and then not real, something like an opera,  
55 and then I walked down toward the machine gun sounds,  
56 the same river, and the moon looked across at me  
57 and in the path I saw a small snake, just a small one,  
58 looked like a rattler, but it couldn't be a rattler,  
59 and it was scared seeing me, and I grabbed it behind the neck  
60 before it could coil and I held it then  
61 its little body curled around my wrist  
62 like a finger of love and all the trees looked with eyes  
63 and I put my mouth to its mouth  
64 and love was lightning and remembrance,  
65 dead communists, dead fascists, dead democrats, dead gods and  
66 back in what was left of the hut Jones  
67 had his dead black arm around her dead blue waist.

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I

1 the cannoneer is dead,  
2 and all the troops;

3 the conceited drummer boy  
4 dumber than the tombs  
5 lies in a net of red;

6 and under leaves, bugs twitch antennae  
7 deciding which way to move  
8 under the cool umbrella of decay;

9 the wind rills down like thin water  
10 and searches under clothing,  
11 sifting and sorry;

12 ... clothing anchored with heavy bones  
13 in noonday sleep  
14 like men gone down on ladders, resting;

15 yet an hour ago  
16 tree-shadow and man-shadow  
17 showed their outline against the sun---

18 yet now, not a man amongst them  
19 can single out the reason  
20 that moved them down toward nothing;

21 and I think mostly of some woman far off  
22 arranging important jars on some second shelf  
23 and humming a dry, sun-lit tune.

II

24 outside, the quick storm turns the night slowly  
25 backwards  
26 and sends it shifting to old shores,  
27 and everywhere are bones ... rib bones and light,  
28 and grass, grass leaning left;  
29 and we hump our backs against the wet like living things,  
30 and this one with me now  
31 holds my yearning like a packet  
32 slips it into her purse with her powders and potions  
33 pulls up a sheer stocking, chatters, touches her hair:  
34 it's raining, oh damn it all, it's raining!  
35 and on the battlefield the rocks are wet and cool,  
36 the fine grains of rock glint moon-fire,  
37 and she curses under a small green hat  
38 like a crown  
39 and walks like a gawky marionette  
40 into the strings of rain.

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Bukowski, Charles: What to Do with Contributor's Copies? [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

(Dear Sir: Although we realize it is insufficient payment for your poems, you will receive 4 contributor's copies, which we will mail directly to you or to anyone you wish.---Note from the Editor.)

1 well, ya better mail one to M.S. or she'll prob.  
2 put her pisser in the oven, she thinks she is hot  
3 stuff, and mabe she is, I sure as hell wd't  
4 know  
5 then there is C.W. who does not answer his mail  
6 but is very busy teaching young boys how to write  
7 and I know he is going places, and since he is,  
8 ya better mail 'm one ...  
9 then there's my old aunt in  
10 Palm Springs nothing but money and I have  
11 everything but money ... talent, a good singing voice,  
12 a left hook deep to the gut ... send her a copy,  
13 she hung up on me, last time I phoned her drunk,

14 giving evidence of need, she hung up  
15 on me ...  
16 then there's this girl in Sacramento who  
17 writes me these little letters ... very depressed  
18 bitch, mixed and beaten like some waffle, making  
19 gentle intellectual overtures which I ignore,  
20 but send her a magazine  
21 in lieu of a hot poker.

22 that makes 4?  
23 I hope to send you some more poems  
24 soon because I figure that  
25 people who print my poems are a little  
26 mad, but that's all right. I am also  
27 that way. anyhow---

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28 I hope  
29 meanwhile  
30 you do not fold up  
31 before  
32 I  
33 do.  
34 c.b.

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Bukowski, Charles: Brave Bull [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I did not know  
2 that the Mexicans  
3 did this:  
4 the bull  
5 had been brave  
6 and now  
7 they dragged him  
8 dead  
9 around the ring  
10 by his  
11 tail,



12 a brave bull  
13 dead,  
14 but not just another bull,  
15 this was a special  
16 bull,  
17 and to me  
18 a special  
19 lesson ...  
20 and although Brahms  
21 stole his First from Beethoven's  
22 9th.  
23 and although  
24 the bull  
25 was dead  
26 his head and his horns and  
27 his insides dead,  
28 he had been better than  
29 Brahms,  
30  
as good as  
31  
Beethoven,  
32 and

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33 as we walked out  
34 the sound and meaning  
35 of him  
36 kept crawling up my arms  
37 and although people bumped me and  
38 stepped on my toes  
39 the bull burned within me  
40 my candle of  
41 jesus,  
42 dragged by his tail  
43 he had nothing to do  
44 having done  
it all,  
45 and through the long tunnels and minatory glances,  
46 the elbows and feet and eyes, I prayed for California,  
47 and the dead bull  
48 in man  
49 and in me,  
50 and I clasped my hands  
51 deep within my  
52 pockets, seized darkness,  
53 and moved on.

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Bukowski, Charles: It's Not Who Lived Here [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 but who died here;  
2 and it's not when  
3 but how;  
4 it's not  
5 the known great  
6 but the great who died unknown;  
7 it's not  
8 the history  
9 of countries  
10 but the lives of men.

11 fables are dreams,  
12 not lies,  
13 and  
14 truth changes  
15 as  
16 men change,  
17 and when truth becomes stable  
18 men  
19 will  
20 become dead  
21 and  
22 the insect  
23 and the fire and  
24 the flood  
25 will become  
26 truth.

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Bukowski, Charles: O, We Are the Outcasts [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       ah, christ, what a CREW:  
2       more  
3       poetry, always more  
4       P O E T R Y .

5       if it doesn't come, coax it out with a  
6       laxative. get your name in LIGHTS,  
7       get it up there in  
8       8½ × 11 mimeo.

9       keep it coming like a miracle.

10      ah christ, writers are the most sickening  
11      of all the louts!  
12      yellow-toothed, slump-shouldered,  
13      gutless, flea-bitten and  
14      obvious ... in tinker-toy rooms  
15      with their flabby hearts  
16      they tell us  
17      what's wrong with the world---  
18      as if we didn't know that a cop's club  
19      can crack the head  
20      and that war is a dirtier game than  
21      marriage ...  
22      or down in a basement bar  
23      hiding from a wife who doesn't appreciate him  
24      and children he doesn't  
25      want  
26      he tells us that his heart is drowning in  
27      vomit. hell, all our hearts are drowning in vomit,  
28      in pork salt, in bad verse, in soggy  
29      love.  
30      but he thinks he's alone and  
31      he thinks he's special and he thinks he's Rimbaud

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32      and he thinks he's  
33      Pound.

34      and death! how about death? did you know  
35      that we all have to die? even Keats died, even  
36      Milton!  
37      and D. Thomas---THEY KILLED HIM, of course.  
38      Thomas didn't want all those free drinks  
39      all that free pussy---

40 they ... FORCED IT ON HIM  
41 when they should have left him alone so he could  
42 write write WRITE!

43 poets.

44 and there's another  
45 type. I've met them at their country  
46 places (don't ask me what I was doing there because  
47 I don't know).

48 they were born with money and  
49 they don't have to dirty their hands in  
50 slaughterhouses or washing  
51 dishes in grease joints or  
52 driving cabs or pimping or selling pot.

53 this gives them time to understand  
54 Life.

55 they walk in with their cocktail glass  
56 held about heart high  
57 and when they drink they just  
58 sip.

59 you are drinking green beer which you  
60 brought with you  
61 because you have found out through the years  
62 that rich bastards are tight---

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63 they use 5 cent stamps instead of airmail  
64 they promise to have all sorts of goodies ready  
65 upon your arrival  
66 from gallons of whiskey to  
67 50 cent cigars. but it's never  
68 there.  
69 and they HIDE their women from you---  
70 their wives, x-wives, daughters, maids, so forth,  
71 because they've read your poems and  
72 figure all you want to do is fuck everybody and

73 everything. which once might have been  
74 true but is no longer quite  
75 true.

76 and---  
77 he WRITES TOO.  
78 POETRY, of  
79 course. everybody  
80 writes  
81 poetry.

82 he has plenty of time and a  
83 postoffice box in town  
84 and he drives there 3 or 4 times a day  
85 looking and hoping for accepted  
86 poems.

87 he thinks that poverty is a weakness of the  
88 soul.

89 he thinks your mind is ill because you are  
90 drunk all the time and have to work in a  
91 factory 10 or 12 hours a  
92 night.

93 he brings his wife in, a beauty, stolen from a  
94 poorer rich  
95 man.

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96 he lets you gaze for 30 seconds  
97 then hustles her  
98 out. she has been crying for some  
99 reason.

100 you've got 3 or 4 days to linger in the  
101 guesthouse he says,  
102 "come on over to dinner  
103 sometime."  
104 but he doesn't say when or  
105 where. and then you find that you are not even

106 IN HIS HOUSE.

107 you are in  
108 ONE of his houses but  
109 his house is somewhere  
110 else---  
111 you don't know  
112 where.

113 he even has x-wives in some of his  
114 houses.

115 his main concern is to keep his x-wives away from  
116 you. he doesn't want to give up a  
117 damn thing. and you can't blame him:  
118 his x-wives are all young, stolen, kept,  
119 talented, well-dressed, schooled, with  
120 varying French-German accents.

121 and!: they  
122 WRITE POETRY TOO. or  
123 PAINT. or  
124 fuck.

125 but his big problem is to get down to that mail  
126 box in town to get back his  
127 rejected poems

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128 and to keep his eye on all the other mail boxes  
129 in all his other  
130 houses.

131 meanwhile, the starving Indians  
132 sell beads and baskets in the streets of the small desert  
133 town.

134 the Indians are not allowed in his houses  
135 not so much because they are a fuck-threat  
136 but because they are  
137 dirty and  
138 ignorant. dirty? I look down at my shirt

139 with the beerstain on the front.  
140 ignorant? I light a 6 cent cigar and  
141 forget about  
142 it.

143 he or they or somebody was supposed to meet me at  
144 the  
145 train station.

146 of course, they weren't  
147 there. "We'll be there to meet the great  
148 Poet!"

149 well, I looked around and didn't see any  
150 great poet. besides it was 7 a.m. and  
151 40 degrees. those things  
152 happen. the trouble was there were no  
153 bars open. nothing open. not even a  
154 jail.

155 he's a poet.  
156 he's also a doctor, a head-shrinker.  
157 no blood involved that  
158 way. he won't tell me whether I am crazy or  
159 not---I don't have the  
160 money.

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161 he walks out with his cocktail glass  
162 disappears for 2 hours, 3 hours,  
163 then suddenly comes walking back in  
164 unannounced  
165 with the same cocktail glass  
166 to make sure I haven't gotten hold of  
167 something more precious than  
168 Life itself.

169 my cheap green beer is killing  
170 me. he shows heart (hurrah) and  
171 gives me a little pill that stops my  
172 gagging.  
173 but nothing decent to

174 drink.

175 he'd bought a small 6 pack  
176 for my arrival but that was gone in an  
177 hour and 15  
178 minutes.

179 "I'll buy you barrels of beer," he had  
180 said.

181 I used his phone (one of his phones)  
182 to get deliveries of beer and  
183 cheap whiskey. the town was ten miles away,  
184 downhill. I peeled my poor dollars from my poor  
185 roll. and the boy needed a tip, of  
186 course.

187 the way it was shaping up I could see that I was  
188 hardly Dylan Thomas yet, not even  
189 Robert Creeley. certainly Creeley wouldn't have  
190 had beerstains on his  
191 shirt.

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192 anyhow, when I finally got hold of one of his  
193 x-wives I was too drunk to  
194 make it.

195 scared too. sure, I imagined him peering  
196 through the window---  
197 he didn't want to give up a damn thing---  
198 and  
199 leveling the luger while I was  
200 working  
201 while "The March to the Gallows" was playing over  
202 the Muzak  
203 and shooting me in the ass first and  
204 my poor brain  
205 later.

206 "an intruder," I could hear him telling them,



207 "ravishing one of my helpless x-wives."

208 I see him published in some of the magazines  
209 now. not very good stuff.

210 a poem about me  
211 too: the Polack.

212 the Polack whines too much. the Polack whines about his  
213 country, other countries, all countries, the Polack  
214 works overtime in a factory like a fool, among other  
215 fools with "pre-drained spirits."  
216 the Polack drinks seas of green beer  
217 full of acid. the Polack has an ulcerated  
218 hemorrhoid. the Polack picks on fags  
219 "fragile fags." the Polack hates his  
220 wife, hates his daughter. his daughter will become  
221 an alcoholic, a prostitute. the Polack has an  
222 "obese burned out wife." the Polack has a  
223 spastic gut. the Polack has a  
224 "rectal brain."

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225 thank you, Doctor (and poet). any charge for  
226 this? I know I still owe you for the  
227 pill.

228 Your poem is not too good  
229 but at least I got your starch up.  
230 most of your stuff is about as lively as a  
231 wet and deflated  
232 beachball. but it is your round, you've won a round.  
233 going to invite me out this  
234 Summer? I might scrape up  
235 trainfare. got an Indian friend who'd like to meet  
236 you and yours. he swears he's got the biggest  
237 pecker in the state of California.

238 and guess what?  
239 he writes  
240 POETRY  
241 too!

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Bukowski, Charles: Poem for My 43rd Birthday [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1        To end up alone  
2        in a tomb of a room  
3        without cigarettes  
4        or wine---  
5        just a lightbulb  
6        and a potbelly,  
7        grayhaired,  
8        and glad to have  
9        the room.

10       ... in the morning  
11       they're out there  
12       making money:  
13       judges, carpenters,  
14       plumbers, doctors,  
15       newsboys, policemen,  
16       barbers, carwashers,  
17       dentists, florists,  
18       waitresses, cooks,  
19       cabdrivers ...

20       and you turn over  
21       to your left side  
22       to get the sun  
23       on your back  
24       and out  
25       of your eyes.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Genius of the Crowd [from The Rooming House Madrigals:

1       There is enough treachery, hatred,  
2                               violence,  
3       Absurdity in the average human  
4                               being  
5       To supply any given army on any given  
6       day.  
7       AND The Best At Murder Are Those  
8       Who Preach Against It.  
9       AND The Best At Hate Are Those  
10       Who Preach LOVE  
11       AND THE BEST AT WAR  
12       ---FINALLY---ARE THOSE WHO  
13       PREACH  
14                                       PEACE

15       Those Who Preach GOD  
16       NEED God  
17       Those Who Preach PEACE  
18       Do Not Have Peace.  
19       THOSE WHO PREACH LOVE  
20       DO NOT HAVE LOVE  
21       BEWARE THE PREACHERS  
22       Beware The Knowers.

23               Beware  
24               Those Who  
25               Are ALWAYS  
26               READING  
27               BOOKS

28       Beware Those Who Either Detest  
29       Poverty Or Are Proud Of It

30       BEWARE Those Quick To Praise  
31       For They Need PRAISE In Return

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32       BEWARE Those Quick To Censure:  
33       They Are Afraid Of What They Do  
34       Not Know

35 Beware Those Who Seek Constant  
36 Crowds; They Are Nothing  
37 Alone

38 Beware  
39 The Average Man  
40 The Average Woman  
41 BEWARE Their Love

42 Their Love Is Average, Seeks  
43 Average  
44 But There Is Genius In Their Hatred  
45 There Is Enough Genius In Their  
46 Hatred To Kill You, To Kill  
47 Anybody.

48 Not Wanting Solitude  
49 Not Understanding Solitude  
50 They Will Attempt To Destroy  
51 Anything  
52 That Differs  
53 From Their Own

54 Not Being Able  
55 To Create Art  
56 They Will Not  
57 Understand Art

58 They Will Consider Their Failure  
59 As Creators  
60 Only As A Failure  
61 Of The World

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62 Not Being Able To Love Fully  
63 They Will BELIEVE Your Love  
64 Incomplete  
65 AND THEN THEY WILL HATE  
66 YOU

67 And Their Hatred Will Be Perfect  
68 Like A Shining Diamond  
69 Like A Knife

70 Like A Mountain  
71 LIKE A TIGER  
72 LIKE Hemlock

73 Their Finest  
74 ART

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Bukowski, Charles:4:30 A.M. [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 the fields rattle  
2 with red birds;  
3 it is 4:30 in  
4 the morning,  
5 it is always  
6 4:30 in the morning,  
7 and I listen for  
8 my friends:  
9 the garbagemen  
10 and the thieves,  
11 and cats dreaming  
12 red birds  
13 and red birds dreaming  
14 worms,  
15 and worms dreaming  
16 along the bones of  
17 my love,  
18 and I cannot sleep,  
19 and soon morning will come,  
20 the workers will rise,  
21 and they will look for me  
22 at the docks,  
23 and they will say,  
24 "he is drunk again,"  
25 but I will be asleep,  
26 finally,  
27 among the bottles and  
28 sunlight,  
29 all darkness gone,  
30 my arms spread like  
31 a cross,  
32 the red birds

33 flying,  
34 flying,  
35 roses opening in the smoke,

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36 and  
37 like something stabbed and  
38 healing,  
39 like  
40 40 pages through a bad novel,  
41 a smile upon  
42 my idiot's face.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Simplicity of Everything in Viet Nam [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 man shot through back while  
2 holding robes of a young priest  
3 who looks like a woman,  
4 and here we hang:  
5 moon-bright  
6 neatly gloved,  
7 motorcycles everywhere, bees asleep,  
8 nozzles rusted,  
9 climate awry,  
10 and we shake our bones,  
11 blind skin there,  
12 and the soldier falls dead,  
13 another dead soldier,  
14 the black robe of a young priest  
15 who looks like a woman  
16 is now beautifully red,  
17 and the tanks  
18 come on through.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Night They Took Whitey [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 bird-dream and peeling wallpaper  
2 symptoms of grey sleep  
3 and at 4 a.m. Whitey came out of his room  
4 (the solace of the poor is in numbers  
5 like Summer poppies)  
6 and he began to scream help me! help me! help me!  
7 (an old man with hair as white as any ivory tusk)  
8 and he was vomiting blood  
9 help me help me help me  
10 and I helped him lie down in the hall  
11 and I beat on the landlady's door  
12 (she is as French as the best wine but as tough as  
13 an American steak) and  
14 I hollered her name, Marcella! Marcella!  
15 (the milkman would soon be coming with his  
16 pure white bottles like chilled lilies)  
17 Marcella! Marcella! help me help me help me,  
18 and she screamed back through the door:  
19 you polack bastard, are you drunk again? then  
20 Promethean the eye at the door  
21 and she  
22 sized up the red river in her rectangular brain  
23 (oh, I am nothing but a drunken polack  
24 a bad pinch-hitter a writer of letters to the newspapers)  
25 and she spoke into the phone like a lady ordering bread and  
26 eggs,  
27 and I held to the wall  
28 dreaming bad poems and my own death  
29 and the men came ... one with a cigar, the other needing a  
30 shave,  
31 and they made him stand up and walk down the steps  
32 his ivory head on fire (Whitey, my drinking pal---  
33 all the songs, Sing Gypsy, Laugh Gypsy, talk about  
34 the war, the fights, the good whores,  
35 skid-row hotels floating in wine,

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36 floating in crazy talk,  
37 cheap cigars and anger)  
38 and the siren took him away, except the red part  
39 and I began to vomit and the French wolverine screamed  
40 you'll have to clean it up, all of it, you and Whitey!  
41 and the steamers sailed and rich men on yachts  
42 kissed girls young enough to be their daughters,  
43 and the milkman came by and stared  
44 and the neon lights blinked selling something

45 tires or oil or underwear  
46 and she slammed her door and I was alone  
47 ashamed  
48 it was the war, the war forever, the war was never over,  
49 and I cried against the peeling walls,  
50 the weakness of our bones, our sotted half-brains,  
51 and morning began to creep into the hall---  
52 toilets flushed, there was bacon, there was coffee,  
53 there were hangovers, and I too  
54 went in and closed my door and sat down and waited for the  
55 sun.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Japanese Wife [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 O lord, he said, Japanese women,  
2 real women, they have not forgotten,  
3 bowing and smiling  
4 closing the wounds men have made;  
5 but American women will kill you like they  
6 tear a lampshade,  
7 American women care less than a dime,  
8 they've gotten derailed,  
9 they're too nervous to make good:  
10 always scowling, belly-aching,  
11 disillusioned, overwrought;  
12 but oh lord, say, the Japanese women:  
13 there was this one,  
14 I came home and the door was locked  
15 and when I broke in she broke out the bread knife  
16 and chased me under the bed  
17 and her sister came  
18 and they kept me under that bed for two days,  
19 and when I came out, at last,  
20 she didn't mention attorneys,  
21 just said, you will never wrong me again,  
22 and I didn't; but she died on me,  
23 and dying, said, you can wrong me now,  
24 and I did,  
25 but you know, I felt worse then  
26 than when she was living;  
27 there was no voice, no knife,  
28 nothing but little Japanese prints on the wall,



29 all those tiny people sitting by red rivers  
30 with flying green birds,  
31 and I took them down and put them face down  
32 in a drawer with my shirts,  
33 and it was the first time I realized  
34 that she was dead, even though I buried her;  
35 and some day I'll take them all out again,

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36 all the tan-faced little people  
37 sitting happily by their bridges and huts  
38 and mountains---  
39 but not right now,  
40 not just yet.

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Bukowski, Charles: Sundays Kill More Men Than Bombs [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 due to weekend conditions, and although there's  
2 too much smog, everything's jammed  
3 and it's worse than masts down in a storm  
4 you can't go anywhere  
5 and if you do, they are all staring through glass windows  
6 or waiting for dinner, and no matter how bad it is  
7 (not the glass, the dinner)  
8 they'll spend more time talking about it  
9 than eating it,  
10 and that's why my wife got rid of me:  
11 I was a boor and didn't know when to smile  
12 or rather (worse) I did,  
13 but didn't, and one afternoon  
14 with people diving into pools  
15 and playing cards  
16 and watching carefully shaven T.V. comedians  
17 in starched white shirts and fine neckties  
18 kidding about what the world had done to them,  
19 I pretended a headache  
20 and they gave me the young lady's bedroom  
21 (she was about 17)  
22 and hell, I crawled beneath her sheets  
23 and pretended to sleep

24 but everybody knew I was a cornered fake,  
25 but I tried all sorts of tricks---  
26 I tried to think of Wilde behind bars,  
27 but Wilde was dead;  
28 I tried to think of Hem shooting a lion  
29 or walking down Paris streets  
30 medallioned with his wild buddies,  
31 the whores swooning to their beautiful knees,  
32 but all I did was twist within her young sheets,  
33 and from the headboard, shaking in my nervous storm,  
34 several trinkets fell upon me---  
35 elephants, glass dogs with seductive stares,

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36 a young boy and girl carrying a pail of water,  
37 but nothing by Bach or conducted by Ormandy,  
38 and I finally gave it up, went into the john  
39 and tried to piss (I knew I would be constipated  
40 for a week), and then I walked out,  
41 and my wife, a reader of Plato and e.e. cummings  
42 ran up and said, "ooooh, you should have seen  
43 BooBoo at the pool! He turned backflips and sideflips  
44 and it was the funniest thing you've  
45 EVER seen!"

46 I think it was not much later that the man came  
47 to our third floor apartment  
48 about seven in the morning  
49 and handed me a summons for divorce,  
50 and I went back to bed with her and said,  
51 don't worry, it's all right, and  
52 she began to cry cry cry,  
53 I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry,  
54 and I said, please stop,  
55 remember your heart.

56 but that morning when she left  
57 about 8 o'clock she looked  
58 the same as ever, maybe even better.  
59 I didn't even bother to shave;  
60 I called in sick and went down  
61 to the corner bar.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Loser [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       and the next I remembered I'm on a table,  
2       everybody's gone: the head of bravery  
3       under light, scowling, flailing me down ...  
4       and then some toad stood there, smoking a cigar:  
5       "Kid you're no fighter," he told me,  
6       and I got up and knocked him over a chair;  
7       it was like a scene in a movie, and  
8       he stayed there on his big rump and said  
9       over and over: "Jesus, Jesus, whasamatta wit  
10      you?" and I got up and dressed,  
11      the tape still on my hands, and when I got home  
12      I tore the tape off my hands and  
13      wrote my first poem,  
14      and I've been fighting  
15      ever since.

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Bukowski, Charles: On a Night You Don't Sleep [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       at the sea at the beach in the dark there was somebody  
2       sitting in a car along the shore and playing this drum  
3       as if in Africa and the cops rode by on the sidewalk  
4       and I went down to the disappointing sea  
5       and saw two blue lights in the water and a boat  
6       and a man walked by in a white shirt and squatted by the  
7       shore and got up and walked along the shore  
8       and then another man came and followed him:  
9       they both walked along the shore by the water  
10      one 12 feet behind the other and I watched them until  
11      they disappeared and then I got up and walked through  
12      the sand to the cement and through a bar door I saw a  
13      negro singing with a light on his face  
14      he wailed a strange song and the sound of the song twisted  
15      in the air and everything was empty and dry and easy  
16      and I got into my car and drove back to the hot city  
17      but I knew I would always remember the time  
18      and the catch of it--the way the night hung undisturbed

19 with people walking on it like some quiet rug  
20 and a small boat rocking bravely by bulldogging water  
21 and the colored pier lights like a broken mind sick in the sea.

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Bukowski, Charles: An Empire of Coins [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 the legs are gone and the hopes---the lava of outpouring,  
2 and I haven't shaved in sixteen days  
3 but the mailman still makes his rounds and  
4 water still comes out of the faucet and I have a photo of  
5 myself with glazed and milky eyes full of simple music  
6 in golden trunks and 12 oz. gloves when I made the semi-finals  
7 only to be taken out by a German brute who should have been  
8 locked in a cage for the insane and allowed to drink blood.  
9 Now I am insane and stare at the wallpaper as one would stare  
10 at a Cézanne or an early Picasso (he has lost it), and I sent out  
11 the girls for beer, the old girls who barely bother to wipe  
12 their asses and say, well, I guess I won't comb my hair today:  
13 it might bring me luck! well, anyway, they wash the dishes and  
14 chop the wood, and the landlady keeps saying let me in, I can't  
15 get in, you've got the lock on, and what's all that singing and  
16 cussing in there? but she only wants a piece of ass, she pretends  
17 she wants the rent  
18 but she's not gonna get either one of  
'em.  
19 meanwhile the skulls of the dead are full of beetles and  
20 old football scores like S.C. 16, N.D. 14 on a John  
21 Baker field goal.

22 I can see the fleet from my window, the sails and the guns,  
23 always  
24 the guns poking their eyes in the sky looking for trouble like  
25 young  
26 L.A. cops who haven't yet shaved and the young sailors out  
27 there sex-hungry, trying to act tough, trying to act like men  
28 but really closer to their mother's nipples than to a true evalu-  
29 ation of existence. I say, god damn it, that  
30 the legs are gone and the outpourings too. inside my brain  
31 rats snip and snipe and  
32 pour oil

33 to burn and fire out early dreams.  
34 darling, says one of the girls, you've got to snap out of it,

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35 we're running out of MONEY. how do you want  
36 your toast?  
37 light or dark?

38 a woman's a woman, I say, and I put my binoculars between  
39 her  
40 kneecaps and I can see where  
41 empires have fallen.

42 I wish I had a brush, some paint, some paint and a brush, I say.

43 why? asks one of the  
44 whores

45 BECAUSE RATS DON'T LIKE OIL! I scream.

46 (I can't do it. I don't belong here. I listen to radio programs  
47 and people's voices and I marvel that they can get excited  
48 and interested over nothing) and I flick out the lights, I  
49 crash out the lights, and I pull the shades down, I  
50 tear the shades down as I light my last cigar  
51 then dream jump from the Empire State Building  
52 into the thickheaded bullbrained mob with the hard-on attitude;  
53 already forgotten the dead of Normandy, Lincoln's stringy  
54 beard,  
55 all the bulls that have died to flashing red capes,  
56 all the love that has died in women and men  
57 while fools have been elevated to the trumpet's succulent sneer  
58 and I have fought (red-handed and drunk  
59 in slop-pitted alleys)  
60 the bartenders of this rotten land.

61 and I laugh, I can still laugh, who can't laugh when the whole  
62 thing  
63 is so ridiculous  
64 that only the insane, the clowns, the  
half-wits,  
65 the cheaters, the whores, the horseplayers, the bankrobbers, the  
66 poets ... are interesting?

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67 in the dark I hear hands reaching for the last of my money  
68 like mice nibbling at paper, automatic, while I slumber,  
69 a false drunken God asleep at the wheel ...  
70 a quarter rolls across the floor, and I remember all the faces and  
71 the football heroes, and everything has meaning, and an editor  
72 writes me, you are good  
73 but  
74 you are too emotional  
75 the way to whip life is to quietly frame the agony,  
76 study it and put it to sleep in the abstract.

77 is there anything less abstract  
78 than dying everyday and  
79 on the last day?

80 the door closes and the last of the great whores are gone  
81 and they are all great, somehow no matter how they have  
82 killed me, they are great, and I smoke quietly  
83 thinking of Mexico, of the decaying horses and dead bulls,  
84 of Havana and Spain and Normandy, of the jabbering insane,  
85 of the Kamikaze  
86 winning whether they lived or died,  
87 of my dead friends, of no more friends  
88 ever; and the voice of my Mexican buddy saying, you won't die  
89 you won't die in this war, you're too smart, you'll take care  
90 of yourself.

91 I keep thinking of the bulls. the rotting bulls, dying everyday.  
92 the whores are gone. the shells have stopped for a minute.

93 fuck everybody.

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1 All I know is this: the ravens kiss my mouth,  
2 the veins are tangled here,  
3 the sea is made of blood.

4 All I know is this: the hands reaching out,  
5 my eyes are closed, my ears are closed,  
6 the sky rejects my scream.

7 All I know is this: my nostrils drip with dreams  
8 the hounds lap us up, the fools laugh out,  
9 the clock ticks out the dead.

10 All I know is this: my feet are sorrow here,  
11 my words are less than lilies, my words are clotted now:  
12 the ravens kiss my mouth.

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Bukowski, Charles: On Going Back to the Street after Viewing an Art Show [from  
The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black  
Sparrow Press]

1 they talk down through  
2 the centuries to us,  
3 and this we need more and more,  
4 the statues and paintings  
5 in midnight age  
6 as we go along  
7 holding dead hands.

8 and we would say  
9 rather than delude the unknowing:  
10 a damn good show,  
11 but hardly enough for a horse to eat,  
12 and out on the sunshine street where  
13 eyes are dabbled in metazoan faces  
14 I decide again  
15 that in these centuries  
16 they have done very well  
17 considering the nature of their

18 brothers:  
19 it's more than good  
20 that some of them,  
21 (closer really to field-mouse than  
22 falcon)  
23 have been bold enough to try.

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Bukowski, Charles:Anthony [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 and the hedges wet in the rain, flaking in a sheet of wind,  
2 and for a moment everything working: rusty bells, April  
3 birds, unblushing brides, anything you can name that has not  
4 died, so exactly, and even the wind like a lover's hand,  
5 a somehow important wind, something too like sleep or slain  
6 enemies,  
7 and the feet move through paths not restricted by the  
8 bull-goaded mind,  
9 and see---all and everywhere---hedges in the rain  
10 like great cathedrals now, new Caesars, cats walking,  
11 new gods without plug or wire, love without wasps,  
12 new Christians, bulls, Romes, new new leaves, new rain  
13 now splashing through the fire; and I close the door, old room,  
14 I fall upon the couch, I sweat  
15 and I cough I cough small words  
16 lions bearing down through coffee cups and puddles, I  
17 sigh, Cleopatra. Not for either of us, but for the rest.

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Bukowski, Charles:Layover [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 Making love in the sun, in the morning sun  
2 in a hotel room  
3 above the alley  
4 where poor men poke for bottles;



5 making love in the sun  
6 making love by a carpet redder than our blood,  
7 making love while the boys sell headlines  
8 and Cadillacs,  
9 making love by a photograph of Paris  
10 and an open pack of Chesterfields,  
11 making love while other men---poor fools---  
12 work.

13 That moment---to this ...  
14 may be years in the way they measure,  
15 but it's only one sentence back in my mind---  
16 there are so many days  
17 when living stops and pulls up and sits  
18 and waits like a train on the rails.  
19 I pass the hotel at 8  
20 and at 5; there are cats in the alleys  
21 and bottles and bums,  
22 and I look up at the window and think,  
23 I no longer know where you are,  
24 and I walk on and wonder where  
25 the living goes  
26 when it stops.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Dogs of Egypt [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 the dirty dogs of Egypt stride down my bones  
2 the cat goes home in the morning  
3 and I think of agony when there's little else to  
4 do, and there's usually little else to do  
5 except think the agony might kill us---  
6 but, perhaps, what really saves us from it  
7 is our being able to luxuriate in it---  
8 like an old lady putting on a red hat.

9 yet my walls are stained where broken glass has  
10 pissed its liquor.

11 I see agony in a box of kitchen soap  
12 and the walls want their flatness to be my  
13 flatness, o the dirty dogs of Egypt,  
14 I see flatirons hanging from hooks  
15 the eagle is a canary in the breakfastnook  
16 eating dry seed and cramped by the dream.

17 I want so much that is not here and do not know  
18 where to go.

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Bukowski, Charles: Old Man, Dead in a Room [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 this thing upon me is not death  
2 but it's as real  
3 and as landlords full of maggots  
4 pound for rent  
5 I eat walnuts in the sheath  
6 of my privacy  
7 and listen for more important  
8 drummers;  
9 it's as real, it's as real  
10 as the broken-boned sparrow  
11 cat-mouthed, uttering  
12 more than mere  
13 miserable argument;  
14 between my toes I stare  
15 at clouds, at seas of gaunt  
16 sepulcher ...  
17 and scratch my back  
18 and form a vowel  
19 as all my lovely women  
20 (wives and lovers)  
21 break like engines  
22 into steam of sorrow  
23 to be blown into eclipse;  
24 bone is bone  
25 but this thing upon me  
26 as I tear the window shades  
27 and walk caged rugs,  
28 this thing upon me  
29 like a flower and a feast,

30 believe me  
31 is not death and is not  
32 glory  
33 and like Quixote's windmills  
34 makes a foe  
35 turned by the heavens

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36 against one man;  
37 ... this thing upon me,  
38 great god,  
39 this thing upon me  
40 crawling like a snake,  
41 terrifying my love of commonness,  
42 some call Art  
43 some call Poetry;  
44 it's not death  
45 but dying will solve its power  
46 and as my grey hands  
47 drop a last desperate pen  
48 in some cheap room  
49 they will find me there  
50 and never know  
51 my name  
52 my meaning  
53 nor the treasure  
54 of my escape.

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Bukowski, Charles: Love Is a Piece of Paper Torn to Bits [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 all the beer was poisoned and the capt. went down  
2 and the mate and the cook  
3 and we had nobody to grab sail  
4 and the N.wester ripped the sheets like toenails  
5 and we pitched like crazy  
6 the hull tearing its sides  
7 and all the time in the corner  
8 some punk had a drunken slut (my wife)  
9 and was pumping away  
10 like nothing was happening  
11 and the cat kept looking at me

12 and crawling in the pantry  
13 amongst the clanking dishes  
14 with flowers and vines painted on them  
15 until I couldn't stand it anymore  
16 and took the thing  
17 and heaved it  
18 over  
19 the side.

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Bukowski, Charles: Big Bastard with a Sword [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 listen, I went to get a haircut, it was a perfectly good day  
2 until they brought it to me, I mean I sat waiting my turn in the  
3 chair and I found a magazine---the usual thing: women with their  
4 breasts hanging out, etc., and then I turned the page and here  
5 were photos of Orientals in a field, there was a big  
6 bastard with the sword---the caption said he had a very good  
7 swing, plenty of power and the picture showed him getting ready  
8 with the sword, and you saw an Oriental kneeling there with his  
9 eyes closed, then---ZIP!---he was kneeling there without a head  
10 and you could see the neck clean, not yet even  
11 spurting blood, the separation having been so astonishingly  
12 swift, and more photos of beheadings, and then a photo of these  
13 heads lolling in the weeds without bodies, the sun shining on  
14 them.  
15 and the heads looking still almost alive as if they hadn't  
16 accepted the death---and then the barber said  
17  
next!

18 and I walked over to the chair and my head was still on  
19 and his head said to my head,  
20 how do you want it?  
21 and I said, medium.

22 and he seemed like a nice sensible fellow  
23 and it seemed nice to be near nice sensible fellows  
24 and I wanted to ask him about the heads  
25 but I thought it would upset him

26 or maybe even give him ideas  
27 or he might say something that wouldn't help at  
28 all  
29 so I kept quiet.

30 I listened to him cut my hair  
31 and he began talking about his baby  
32 and I tried to concentrate on his

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33 baby, it seemed very sane and logical  
34 but I still kept thinking about the  
35 heads.

36 when he finished the cutting  
37 he turned me in the chair so I could look into the  
38 mirror. my head was still on.

39 fine, I told him, and I got out of the chair, paid, and  
40 gave him a good tip.

41 I walked outside and a woman walked by and she had her  
42 head on and all the people driving cars had their heads  
43 on.

44 I should have concentrated on the breasts, I thought,  
45 it's so much better, all that hanging out, or  
46 the magic and beautiful legs, sex was a fine thing  
47 after all, but my day was spoiled, it would take a night's sleep  
48 anyway, to get rid of the heads. it was terrible to be a human  
49 being: there was so much going  
50 on.

51 I saw my head in a plateglass window  
52 I saw the reflection  
53 and my head had a cigarette in it  
54 my head looked tired and sad  
55 it was not smiling with its new  
56 haircut.

57 then  
58 it disappeared

59 and I walked on  
60 past the houses full of furniture and cats and  
61 dogs and people  
62 and they were lucky and I threw the cigarette  
63 into the gutter  
64 saw it burning on the asphalt

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65 red and white, a tender spit of smoke,  
66 and I decided that the sun  
67 felt good.

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Bukowski, Charles: About My Very Tortured Friend, Peter [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 he lives in a house with a swimming pool  
2 and says the job is  
3 killing him.  
4 he is 27. I am 44. I can't seem to  
5 get rid of  
6 him. his novel keeps coming  
7 back. "what do you expect me to do?" he screams  
8 "go to New York and pump the hands of the  
9 publishers?"  
10 "no," I tell him, "but quit your job, go into a  
11 small room and do the  
12 thing."  
13 "but I need ASSURANCE, I need something to  
14 go by, some word, some sign!"  
15 "some men did not think that way:  
16 Van Gogh, Wagner---"  
17 "oh hell, Van Gogh had a brother who gave him  
18 paints whenever he  
19 needed them!"  
  
20 "look," he said, "I'm over at this broad's house today and  
21 this guy walks in. a salesman. you know  
22 how they talk. drove up in this new  
23 car. talked about his vacation. said he went to  
24 Frisco---saw Fidelio up there but forgot who

25 wrote it. now this guy is 54 years  
26 old. so I told him: 'Fidelio is Beethoven's only  
27 opera.' and then I told  
28 him: 'you're a jerk!' 'whatcha mean?' he  
29 asked. 'I mean, you're a jerk, you're 54 years old and  
30 you don't know anything!'"

31 "what happened  
32 then?"  
33 "I walked out."

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34 "you mean you left him there with  
35 her?"  
36 "yes."

37 "I can't quit my job," he said. "I always have trouble getting a  
38 job. I walk in, they look at me, listen to me talk and  
39 they think right away, ah ha! he's too intelligent for  
40 this job, he won't stay  
41 so there's really no sense in hiring  
42 him.  
43 now, YOU walk into a place and you don't have any trouble:  
44 you look like an old wino, you look like a guy who needs a  
45 job and they look at you and they think:  
46 ah ha!: now here's a guy who really needs work! if we hire  
47 him he'll stay a long time and work  
48 HARD!"

49 "do any of those people," he asks "know you are a  
50 writer, that you write poetry?"  
51 "no."  
52 "you never talk about  
53 it. not even to  
54 me! if I hadn't seen you in that magazine I'd  
55 have never known."  
56 "that's right."  
57 "still, I'd like to tell these people that you are a  
58 writer!"  
59 "don't."  
60 "I'd still like to  
61 tell them."  
62 "why?"  
63 "well, they talk about you. they think you are just a  
64 horseplayer and a drunk."  
65 "I am both of those."

66 "well, they talk about you. you have odd ways. you travel  
67 alone.  
68 I'm the only friend you  
69 have."

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70 "yes."  
71 "they talk you down. I'd like to defend you. I'd like to tell  
72 them you write  
73 poetry."  
74 "leave it alone. I work here like they  
75 do. we're all the same."  
76 "well, I'd like to do it for myself then. I want them to know  
77 why  
78 I travel with  
79 you. I speak 7 languages, I know my music---"  
80 "forget it."  
81 "all right, I'll respect your  
82 wishes. but there's something else---"  
83 "what?"  
84 "I've been thinking about getting a  
85 piano. but then I've been thinking about getting a  
86 violin too but I can't make up my  
87 mind!"  
88 "buy a piano."  
89 "you think  
90 so?"  
91 "yes."

92 he walks away  
93 thinking about  
94 it.

95 I was thinking about it  
96 too: I figure he can always come over with his  
97 violin and more  
98 sad music.

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1 in the featherbeds of grander times  
2 when Kings could call their shots,  
3 I rather imagine on days like this  
4 that concubines were sought,  
5 or the unspoiled genius  
6 or the chopping block.

7 how about a partridge or a grouse  
8 or a bound behind the merry hounds?  
9 Maybe I'll phone Saroyan in Malibu  
10 or eat a slice of toast ...

11 the trees shake down September  
12 like dysentery, and churches sit on their  
13 corners and wait, and the streetcars are slow,  
14 and everywhere  
15 birds fly, cats walk, people ruefully  
16 exist ...

17 the charmers are gone, the armies have put down  
18 their arms, the druid's drunk, the horses have tossed  
19 their dice; there are no fires, the phone won't ring,  
20 the factory's closed, tenesmus, everything ...

21 I think  
22 even the schizomycetes are sleeping;  
23 I think  
24 the horror of no action is greater  
25 than the scorch of pain; death is the  
26 barker, but things  
27 may get better  
28 yet. I'll use the knives for spreading  
29 jam, and the gas to warm  
30 my greying love.

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1 as the wind breaks in from the sea again  
2 and the land is marred with riot and disorder  
3 be careful with the sabre of choice,  
4 remember  
5 what may have been noble  
6 5 centuries  
7 or even 20 years ago  
8 is now  
9 more often than not  
10 wasted action  
11 your life runs but once,  
12 history has chance after chance  
13 to prove men fools.

14 be careful, then, I would say,  
15 of any seeming noble  
16 deed  
17 ideal  
18 or action,  
19 be for this country or love or Art,  
20 be not taken by the nearness of the minute  
21 or a beauty or politic  
22 that will wilt like a cut flower;  
23 love, yes, but not as a task of marriage,  
24 and beware bad food and excessive labor;  
25 live in a country, you must,  
26 but love is not an order  
27 either of woman or the land;  
28 take your time; and drink as much as is needed  
29 in order to maintain continuance,  
30 for drink is a form of life  
31 wherein the partaker returns to a new chance  
32 at life; furthermore, I say,  
33 live alone as much as possible;  
34 bear children if it happens

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35 but try not to bear  
36 raising them; engage not in small arguments  
37 of hand or voice  
38 unless your foe seeks the life of your body  
39 or the life of your soul; then,  
40 kill, if necessary; and  
41 when it comes time to die  
42 do not be selfish:  
43 consider it inexpensive

44 and where you are going:  
45 neither a mark of shame or failure  
46 or a call upon sorrow  
47 as the wind breaks in from the sea  
48 and time goes on  
49 flushing your bones with soft peace.

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Bukowski, Charles: I Wait in the White Rain [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I wait in the white rain for knives like your tongue  
2 I see the spiral clowns fountain up with myths untrue,  
3 I wrestle spasms in the dark on dark stairways  
4 while dollar crazy landladies  
5 are threaded with the hot needles of sperm,  
6 come these morning drunks  
7 brushing away sunlight from the eyes like a web,  
8 come darling, come gloria patri, come luck,  
9 come anything,  
10 this is the hot way---  
11 points sticking in like armadillos  
12 in the rear of a Benedictine mind,  
13 and snow snow snow snow snow  
14 shovel all the snow upon me I can hold,  
15 gingerbread mouth, duck-like dick,  
16 raisins for buttons, thread for heart-strings,  
17 damned waves of blood caught in them  
18 like a minnow in the Tide of Everywhere  
19 I wait in the white rain for knives like your tongue,  
20 and the trucks go by  
21 with bankrupt faces  
22 the steam of their essence like foul sweat  
23 stale stink death in my socks  
24 all the drums of hell  
25 cannot awaken a rhythm within me  
26 I am gone  
27 like an old pale goldfish  
28 dead and stiff as aunt Helen  
29 looking flat-eyed into the center of my brain  
30 and flushed away like any other waste of man,  
31 the man-turd, the breath of life,  
32 and why we don't go mad as roaches, why not more  
33 suicides I'll never know

34 as I wait in the white rain for knives like your tongue,  
35 I am done, quite; like any ford that cuts off a river

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36 I am done forever and only,  
37 this christ-awful waiting on the end of a stale movie,  
38 everyone screaming for beauty and victory  
39 like children for candy,  
40 my hands open  
41 unamazed hand  
42 unamazed mind  
43 unamazed doorsill  
44 send your flowers to Shakey Joe  
45 or Butternut Carlyle  
46 who might trade them to useful purpose  
47 before everything, everyone,  
48 is dead

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Bukowski, Charles: Breakout [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 The landlord walks up and down the hall  
2 coughing  
3 letting me know he is there,  
4 and I've got to sneak  
5 in the bottles,  
6 I can't walk to the crapper  
7 the lights don't work,  
8 there are holes in the walls from  
9 broken water pipes  
10 and the toilet won't flush,  
11 and the little jackoff  
12 walks up and down  
13 out there  
14 coughing, coughing,  
15 up and down his faded rug  
16 he goes,  
17 and I can't stand it anymore,  
18 I break out,  
19 I GET him  
20 just as he walks by,  
21 "What the hell's wrong?"

22 he screams,  
23 but it's too late,  
24 my fist is working against the bone;  
25 it's over fast and he falls,  
26 withered and wet;  
27 I get my suitcase and then  
28 I am going down the steps,  
29 and there's his wife in the doorway,  
30 she's ALWAYS IN THE DOORWAY,  
31 they don't have anything to do but  
32 stand in doorways and walk up and down the halls,  
33 "Good morning, Mr. Bukowski," her face is a mole's face  
34 praying for my death, "what---"  
35 and I shove her aside,

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36 she falls down the porch steps and  
37 into a hedge,  
38 I hear the branches breaking  
39 and I see her half-stuck in there  
40 like a blind cow,  
41 and then I am going down the street  
42 with my suitcase,  
43 the sun is fine,  
44 and I begin to think about  
45 the next place where I'm  
46 going to set up, and I hope  
47 I can find some decent humans,  
48 somebody who can treat me  
49 better.

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Bukowski, Charles: I Cannot Stand Tears [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 there were several hundred fools  
2 around the goose who broke her leg  
3 trying to decide  
4 what to do  
5 when the guard walked up  
6 and pulled out his cannon  
7 and the issue was finished

8       except for a woman  
9       who ran out of a hut  
10       claiming he'd killed her pet  
11       but the guard rubbed his straps  
12       and told her  
13       kiss my ass,  
14       take it to the president;  
15       the woman was crying  
16       and I cannot stand tears.

17       I folded my canvas  
18       and went further down the road:  
19       the bastards had ruined  
20       my landscape.

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Bukowski, Charles: Horse on Fire [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       Bring bring  
2       straight things  
3       like a horse on fire  
  
4       Ezra said,  
5       write it  
6       soaz a man on th' West Coast'a  
7       Africka culd  
8       understand ut;  
9       and he proceeded to write the Cantos  
10       full of dead languages  
11       newspaper clippings  
12       and love scenes from St. Liz;  
13       bring bring  
14       straight things: in bird-light,  
15       the terror of a mouse,  
16       grass-arms great stone heads;  
17       and reading Canto 90  
18       he put the paper down  
19       Ez did (both their eyes were wet)  
20       and he told her ...  
21       "among the greatest love poems

22 ever written."

23 Ezra, there are many kinds of traitors  
24 of which  
25 the political are the least,  
26 but self-appraisal of  
27 poetry and love  
28 has proved more fools than  
29 rebels.

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Bukowski, Charles: Mother and Son [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 a lady in pink sits on her porch  
2 in tight capris  
3 and her ass is a marvelous thing  
4 pink and crouched in the sun  
5 her ass is a marvelous thing,  
6 and now she rises and claps her hands  
7 toward the sea  
8 and shouts:  
9 TIM, TIM, COME BACK, COME BACK  
10 HERE! it is a child in a walker  
11 running across the cement  
12 looking for butterflies  
13 and a way out,  
14 and she chases him:  
15 TIM, TIM, COME BACK HERE!  
16 I watch her butt  
17 her pink tight magic butt  
18 and it rises in my mind  
19 like a Beethoven symphony  
20 but she is not mine.  
21 I have been quietly reading about  
22 the 18th century glass harmonica  
23 and somebody else will take the pink wobble  
24 to direct hand;  
25 but  
26 really  
27 I've seduced her on this Sunday afternoon  
28 and I have seen each movement and crawl  
29 of pink flesh beneath pink capris,

30 and she catches her boy in the sun  
31 and he laughs back at her  
32 already a man on the dare  
33 exploring the new front yards of his mind,  
34 and he might resent that I have made love  
35 to his mother this way

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36 as he might resent other things  
37 later  
38 pink red dawn blood bombs  
39 the squealing of sheep  
40 the taxis that ride us out,  
41 or he might put on a necktie  
42 choke out the mind  
43 and become like the rest  
44 therefore  
45 making my pink love  
46 upon these black keys  
47 wasted.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Day I Kicked Away a Bankroll [from The Rooming House  
Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 and, I said, you can take your rich aunts and uncles  
2 and grandfathers and fathers  
3 and all their lousy oil  
4 and their seven lakes  
5 and their wild turkey  
6 and buffalo  
7 and the whole state of Texas,  
8 meaning, your crow-blasts  
9 and your Saturday night boardwalks,  
10 and your 2-bit library  
11 and your crooked councilmen  
12 and your pansy artists---  
13 you can take all these  
14 and your weekly newspaper  
15 and your famous tornadoes,  
16 and your filthy floods  
17 and all your yowling cats



18 and your subscription to Time,  
19 and shove them, baby,  
20 shove them.

21 I can handle a pick and ax again (I think)  
22 and I can pick up  
23 25 bucks for a 4-rounder (maybe);  
24 sure, I'm 38  
25 but a little dye can pinch the gray  
26 out of my hair;  
27 and I can still write a poem (sometimes),  
28 don't forget that, and even if  
29 they don't pay off,  
30 it's better than waiting for death and oil,  
31 and shooting wild turkey,  
32 and waiting for the world  
33 to begin.

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34 all right, bum, she said,  
35 get out.

36 what? I said.

37 get out. you've thrown your  
38 last tantrum.  
39 I'm tired of your damned tantrums:  
40 you're always acting like a  
41 character in an O'Neill play.

42 but I'm different, baby,  
43 I can't help  
44 it.

45 you're different, all right!  
46 God, how different!  
47 don't slam  
48 the door  
49 when you leave.

50 but, baby, I love your

51 money!  
  
52 you never once said  
53 you loved me!  
  
54 what do you want  
55 a liar or a  
56 lover?  
  
57 you're neither! out, bum,  
58 out!  
  
59 ... but baby!  
  
60 go back to O'Neill!

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61 I went to the door,  
62 softly closed it and walked away,  
63 thinking: all they want  
64 is a wooden Indian  
65 to say yes and no  
66 and stand over the fire and  
67 not raise too much hell;  
68 but you're getting to be  
69 an old man, kiddo;  
70 next time play it closer  
71 to the  
72 vest.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Dogs [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 certainly sought: one quiet time,  
2 the horses of war

3 shot  
4 with their broken legs,  
5 air sprayed with the languor  
6 of walking through a small neighborhood  
7 at 6 p.m.  
8 to smell porkchops frying,  
9 the arrayed sensibility  
10 of men living through light and sound,  
11 and rain  
12 if there be rain  
13 or snow  
14 if there be snow,  
15 and pain,  
16 living through wives and children  
17 and the sensibility of fire  
18 when it is cold; but  
19 the dogs want a part of us,  
20 they want all of us,  
21 and coming in from the factory  
22 to a bug-infected room  
23 in East Kansas City  
24 is not enough  
25 (but who the enemy is  
26 we are  
27 not quite sure)  
28 only  
29 this morning  
30 combing my hair  
31 one eye on the clock,  
32 wondering if another drink  
33 would do,  
34 I  
35 think  
36 I  
37 saw them.

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Bukowski, Charles: Imbecile Night [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 imbecile night,  
2 corkscrew like a black guitar,  
3 the day was heaving hell,  
4 and now you come

5        crawling down the drainpipes  
6        emptying your bladder  
7        all over the place,  
8        and I have drunk 9 bottles of beer,  
9        a pint of vodka,  
10       smoked 18 cigarettes,  
11       and still you sit upon me,  
12       you march the dead out upon  
13       the balcony of my brain;  
14       I see shaven eyebrows; lips, slippers;  
15       my love, in an old robe, curses,  
16       reaches out for me; the  
17       Confederate Army runs; Hitler  
18       turns a handspring ... then  
19       the yowling love of cats  
20       saves me, brings me  
21       back again ... one more drink,  
22       one more smoke, and in the drawer  
23       a picture of a day at the beach  
24       in 1955 ... god, I was young then,  
25       younger anyhow; and at the window,  
26       one or 2 lights, the city is dead  
27       except for thieves and janitors,  
28       and I am almost dead too, so  
29       much gone, and I raise the bottle  
30       in the center of the room  
31       and you are everywhere  
32       black imbecile night,  
33       you are under my fingernails,  
34       in my ears and mouth,  
35       and here we stand,

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36       you and I, a giant and a midget  
37       locked in disorder, and when the  
38       first sun comes down showing the spiders  
39       at work, caterpillars crawling on razor threads,  
40       you will let me go,  
41       but now you crawl into the tomb of my bottle,  
42       you wink at me and posture, the wallpaper is  
43       weak with roses, the spiders dream of  
44       gold-filled flies, and I walk the room again,  
45       light another cigarette, feeling I really  
46       should go mad, but not quite knowing  
47       how.

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Bukowski, Charles: A Kind of Lecture on a Dull Day When There Isn't Even a Fly  
Around to Kill [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems*,  
1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1        don't kid yourself:  
2        something kills them all---  
3        finally it becomes a matter of  
4        dying of one thing or  
5        the other---  
6        cancer, a new car, sex, warm  
7        art, poetry, ballet dancing,  
8        a hardware store, smoking grass, peeking  
9        out of windows or  
10       wiping the ass with  
11       cheap toilet  
12       paper

13       when Christ began  
14       he had the cross in mind  
15       all along.

16       if I came down off this one  
17       here  
18       it would only be to find a  
19       better one.

20       meanwhile, sitting with a drink in hand  
21       I know, of course,  
22       what it's all  
23       about, come to the point,  
24       dismiss it, forget it,  
25       hand to mouth  
26       I kid myself a  
27       little.

Bukowski, Charles: The Gift [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 that this is the gift  
2 and I am ill with it;  
3 it has sloshed around my bones  
4 and brings me awake to  
5 stare at walls.

6 musing often leads to madness,  
7 o dog with an  
8 old rag doll.

9 into and beyond terror.  
10 seriousness will not do,  
11 seriousness is gone:  
12 we must carve from  
13 fresh marble.

14 hell, jack, this is wise-time:  
15 we must insist on camouflage,  
16 they taught us that;  
17 wine come down through  
18 staring eye,  
19 god coughed alive  
20 through the indistinct smoke  
21 of verse.

22 the light yellow mamas are gone  
23 the garter high on the leg,  
24 the charm of 18 is 80.  
25 and the kisses,  
26 snakes darting liquid silver  
27 have stopped:  
28 no man lives the magic  
29 long.

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30 until one morning it catches you;  
31 you light the fire,  
32 pour a hasty drink  
33 as the psyche crawls like a mouse

34 into an empty pantry.

35 if you were El Greco  
36 or even a watersnake  
37 something could be done.

38 another drink.  
39 well, rub your hands  
40 and prove you are alive.  
41 walk the floor. seriousness  
42 will not do.

43 this is the gift,  
44 this is the gift ...  
45 certainly the charm of dying  
46 lies in the fact  
47 that very little  
48 is lost.

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Bukowski, Charles: Object Lesson [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 It is always best, of course,  
2 to push it in right below  
3 the heart.

4 Don't try to hit the  
5 bull's eye.

6 When seeking damage  
7 aim for a large target  
8 and strike several times.

9 He who pauses is  
10 one damn fool.

11 I remember a discourse  
12 with a leper  
13 who suggested using  
14 hooks and pulleys.

15 Not so. Not so.

16 He was very bitter.

17 It is best to go for the eye,  
18 smash the cornea,  
19 blind him,  
20 then strangle him with rope.

21 My mother suggested an old bathing cap  
22 down the throat.

23 Not so. Not so.

24 Be safe. Be wise.

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25 Tell him to seek the stars  
26 and he will kill himself with climbing.

27 Tell him about Chatterton. Villon.

28 Make suggestions.  
29 Take your time.  
30 He will do it himself.

31 There is no hurry. Time means nothing  
32 to you.

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Bukowski, Charles:Goldfish [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 my goldfish stares with watery eyes  
2 into the hemisphere of my sorrow;  
3 upon the thinnest of threads  
4 we hang together,  
5 hang hang hang  
6 in the hangman's noose;  
7 I stare into his place and  
8 he into mine ...  
9 he must have thoughts,  
10 can you deny this?  
11 he has eyes and hunger  
12 and his love too  
13 died in January; but he is  
14 gold, really gold, and I am grey  
15 and it is indecent to search him out,  
16 indecent like the burning of peaches  
17 or the rape of children,  
18 and I turn and look elsewhere,  
19 but I know that he is there behind me,  
20 one gold goblet of blood,  
21 one thing alone  
22 hung between the reddest cloud  
23 of purgatory  
24 and apt. no. 303.

25 god, can it be  
26 that we are the same?

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Bukowski, Charles:Sleep [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 she was a short one  
2 getting fat and she had once been

3 beautiful and  
4 she drank the wine  
5 she drank the wine in bed and  
6 talked and screamed and cursed at  
7 me  
8 and i told her  
9 please, I need some  
10 sleep.

11 ---sleep? sleep? you son of a  
12 bitch, you never sleep, you  
13 don't need any  
14 sleep!

15 I buried her one morning early  
16 I carried her down the sides of the Hollywood Hills  
17 brambles and rabbits and rocks  
18 running in front of me  
19 and by the time I'd dug the ditch  
20 and stuck her in  
21 belly down  
22 and put the dirt back on  
23 the sun was up and it was warm  
24 and the flies were lazy and  
25 I could hardly see anything out of my eyes  
26 everything was so  
27 warm and yellow.

28 I managed to drive home and I got into bed and I  
29 slept for 5 days and 4  
30 nights.

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Bukowski, Charles: Hello, Willie Shoemaker [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 the Chinaman said don't take the hardware  
2 and gave me a steak I couldn't cut (except the fat)  
3 and there was an ant circling the coffee cup;  
4 I left a dime tip and broke out a stick of cancer,  
5 and outside I gave an old bum who looked about

6 the way I felt, I gave him a quarter,  
7 and then I went up to see the old man  
8 strong as steel girders, fit for bombers and blondes,  
9 up the green rotten steps that housed rats  
10 and past the secretaries showing leg and doing nothing  
11 and the old man sat there looking at me  
12 through two pairs of glasses and a vacation in Paris,  
13 and he said, Kid, I hear you been takin' Marylou out,  
14 and I said, just to dinner, boss,  
15 and he said, just to dinner, eh? you couldn't hold  
16 that broad's pants on with all the rivets on 5th street,  
17 and please remember you are a shipping clerk,  
18 I am the boss here and I pay these broads and I pay you.  
19 yes, sir, I said, and I felt he was going to skip it  
20 but he slid my last check across the desk  
21 and I took it and walked out  
22 past  
23 all the lovely legs, the skirts pulled up to the ass,  
24 Marylou's ass, Ann's ass, Vicki's ass, all of them,  
25 and I went down to the bar  
26 and George said whatya gonna do now,  
27 and I said go to Russia or Hollywood Park,  
28 and I looked up in time to see Marylou come in,  
29 the long thin nose, the delicate face, the lips, the legs,  
30 the breasts, the music, the talk the love the laughing  
31 and she said  
32 I quit when I found out  
33 and the bastard got down on his knees and cried  
34 and kissed the hem of my skirt and offered me money  
35 and I

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36 walked out  
37 and he blubbered like a baby.  
38 George, I said, another drink, and I put a quarter in  
39 the juke  
40 and the sun came out  
41 and I looked outside in time to see the old bum  
42 with my quarter  
43 and a little more luck  
44 that had turned into a happy wine-bottle,  
45 and a bird even flew by cheep cheep,  
46 right there on Eastside downtown, no kidding,  
47 and the Chinaman came in for a quickie  
48 claiming somebody had stolen a spoon and a coffee cup  
49 and I leaned over and bit Marylou on the ear  
50 and the whole joint rocked with music and freedom  
51 and I decided that Russia was too far away  
52 and Hollywood Park just close enough.

Bukowski, Charles: The Literary Life [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1        There is this long still knife somehow like a  
2        cossack's sword ...

3                and C. writes that Ferlinghetti has written  
4                a poem about Castro. well, all the boys  
5                are doing poems on Castro now, only  
6                Castro's not that good  
7                or that bad---just a small horse  
8                in a big race.

9        I see this knife on the stove and I move it to  
10       the breadboard ...

11               after a while it is time to look around and  
12               listen to the engines and wonder if it's  
13               raining; after a while writing won't help  
14               anymore, and drinking won't help anymore, or  
15               even a good piece of ass won't.

16       I see this knife on the breadboard and I move it  
17       to the sink ...

18               this wallpaper here: how many years was it here  
19               before I arrived? ... this cigarette in my hand  
20               it is like a thing itself, like a donkey walking  
21               uphill ... somebody took my candle and candle-  
22               holder: a lady with red hair and a white face  
23               standing near the closet, saying, "Can I have  
24               this? can I really have this?"

25       The edge of the knife is not as sharp as it should  
26       be ... but the point, the point fascinates, the way

27 they grind it down like that---symmetry, real Art,  
28 and I pick up this breadknife and walk into the  
29 dining room ...

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30 Larsen says we mustn't take ourselves so  
31 seriously. Hell, I've been telling him that  
32 for 8 years!

33 There is this full length mirror in the hall. I  
34 can see myself in it and I look, at last.  
35 It hasn't rained in 175 days and it  
36 is as quiet as a sleeping peacock. a  
37 friend of mine shoots pool in a hall across from  
38 the university where he teaches English, and when  
39 he gets tired of that, he drags out a .357 magnum  
40 and splits the rocks in half BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!  
41 while figuring just where the word will fit real  
42 good. In front of the mirror I cut swift circles in the  
43 air, dividing sides of light. I am hypnotized,  
44 unsettled, embarrassed. my nose is pink, my  
45 cheeks are pink, my throat is white, the phone  
46 rings like a wall sliding down and I answer  
47 "Nothing, no, I'm not doing anything ..."

48 it is a dull conversation but it is soon over. I  
49 walk to the window and open it. the cars go by  
50 and a bird turns on the wire and looks at me. I  
51 think 3 centuries ahead, of myself dead that long  
52 and life seems very odd ... like a crack of  
53 light in a buried tomb.

54 the bird flies away and I walk to the machine and  
55 sit down:

56 Dear Willie:

57 I got your letter, everything fine  
58 here ...

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Bukowski, Charles: Countryside [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I drive my car  
2 through a valley  
3 where  
4 (very oddly)  
5 young girls sit on fencerails  
6 showing impartial leg and  
7 haunch  
8 in butterglory sun,  
9 young girls painting  
10 cows and  
11 trees in heat  
12 painting  
13 old farms that sit like  
14 pools of impossibility  
15 on unplanted ground,  
16 ground as still and insane  
17 as the weathervanes  
18 stuck northwest  
19 in the degenerate air;  
20 I drive on  
21 with the girls and their brushes and  
22 their taffy bodies stuck inside my  
23 head like  
24 toothache,  
25 and I get out  
26 much farther down the road  
27 walk into a peeling white cafe  
28 and am handed water in a glass as  
29 thick as a  
30 lip, and  
31 4 people sit  
32 eating,  
33 eyes obsessed with molecules of no  
34 urgency;  
35 I order a veal cutlet and the

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36 waitress walks away  
37 trussed in white flat linen  
38 and I sit and watch and wait  
39 so disattached I wish I could

40 cry or curse or break the water glass;  
41 instead I pour cream into the  
42 coffee  
43 I think of the girls and the cows,  
44 stir the cream with a damaged and  
45 apologetic  
46 tinkle  
47 then decide  
48 not to think or feel anymore  
49 that day.

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Bukowski, Charles: Death Wants More Death [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 death wants more death, and its webs are full:  
2 I remember my father's garage, how child-like  
3 I would brush the corpses of flies  
4 from the windows they had thought were escape---  
5 their sticky, ugly, vibrant bodies  
6 shouting like dumb crazy dogs against the glass  
7 only to spin and flit  
8 in that second larger than hell or heaven  
9 onto the edge of the ledge,  
10 and then the spider from his dank hole  
11 nervous and exposed  
12 the puff of body swelling  
13 hanging there  
14 not really quite knowing,  
15 and then knowing---  
16 something sending it down its string,  
17 the wet web,  
18 toward the weak shield of buzzing,  
19 the pulsing;  
20 a last desperate moving hair-leg  
21 there against the glass  
22 there alive in the sun,  
23 spun in white;

24 and almost like love:  
25 the closing over,  
26 the first hushed spider-sucking:

27 filling its sack  
28 upon this thing that lived;  
29 crouching there upon its back  
30 drawing its certain blood  
31 as the world goes by outside  
32 and my temples scream  
33 and I hurl the broom against them:  
34 the spider dull with spider-anger

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35 still thinking of its prey  
36 and waving an amazed broken leg;  
37 the fly very still,  
38 a dirty speck stranded to straw;  
39 I shake the killer loose  
40 and he walks lame and peeved  
41 towards some dark corner  
42 but I intercept his dawdling  
43 his crawling like some broken hero,  
44 and the straws smash his legs  
45 now waving  
46 above his head  
47 and looking  
48 looking for the enemy  
49 and somehow valiant,  
50 dying without apparent pain  
51 simply crawling backward  
52 piece by piece  
53 leaving nothing there  
54 until at last the red gut-sack splashes  
55 its secrets,  
56 and I run child-like  
57 with God's anger a step behind,  
58 back to simple sunlight,  
59 wondering  
60 as the world goes by  
61 with curled smile  
62 if anyone else  
63 saw or sensed my crime.

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1 talking of death  
2 is like talking of  
3 money---  
4 we neither know the  
5 price or the  
6 worth,  
7 yet looking down at my hands  
8 I can guess  
9 a little.

10 man's made for guessing and for  
11 failure  
12 and woman  
13 for the rest.

14 when the time comes  
15 I hope I can remember  
16 eating a pear.

17 we are sick now  
18 with so many dead  
19 dogs  
20 skulls  
21 armies  
22 flowers  
23 continents.

24 there is a fight---

25 this is it:  
26 against the mechanics  
27 of the thing.

28 eat a good pear today  
29 so tomorrow

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30 you can  
31 remember  
32 it.

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Bukowski, Charles: 10 Lions and the End of the World [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1        in a national magazine of repute  
2        (yes, I was reading it)  
3        I saw a photograph of lions  
4        crossing a street  
5        in some village  
6        and taking their time;  
7        that's the way  
8        it should be  
9        and some day when  
10       they turn out the lights  
11       and the whole thing's over,  
12       I'll be sitting here  
13       in the chalky smoke  
14       thinking of those 10 damned  
15       (yes, I counted them)  
16       lions  
17       blocking traffic  
18       while the roses bloomed.  
19       we all ought to  
20       do that  
21       now  
22       while there's  
23       t  
24       i  
25       m  
26       e.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Blackbirds Are Rough Today [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1        lonely as a dry and used orchard  
2        spread over the earth

3 for use and surrender.

4 shot down like an ex-pug selling  
5 dailies on the corner.

6 taken by tears like  
7 an aging chorus girl  
8 who has gotten her last check.

9 a hanky is in order your lord your  
10 worship.

11 the blackbirds are rough today  
12 like  
13 ingrown toenails  
14 in an overnight  
15 jail---  
16 wine wine whine,  
17 the blackbirds run around and  
18 fly around  
19 harping about  
20 Spanish melodies and bones.

21 and everywhere is  
22 nowhere---  
23 the dream is as bad as  
24 flapjacks and flat tires:

25 why do we go on  
26 with our minds and  
27 pockets full of  
28 dust  
29 like a bad boy just out of

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30 school---  
31 you tell  
32 me,  
33 you who were a hero in some  
34 revolution  
35 you who teach children  
36 you who drink with calmness  
37 you who own large homes

38 and walk in gardens  
39 you who have killed a man and own a  
40 beautiful wife  
41 you tell me  
42 why I am on fire like old dry  
43 garbage.

44 we might surely have some interesting  
45 correspondence.  
46 it will keep the mailman busy.  
47 and the butterflies and ants and bridges and  
48 cemeteries  
49 the rocket-makers and dogs and garage mechanics  
50 will still go on a  
51 while  
52 until we run out of stamps  
53 and/or  
54 ideas.

55 don't be ashamed of  
56 anything; I guess God meant it all  
57 like  
58 locks on  
59 doors.

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Bukowski, Charles: A Word on the Quick and Modern Poem-Makers [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 it is quite easy to appear modern  
2 while in reality being the biggest damn fool  
3 ever born;  
4 I know: I have gotten away with some awful stuff  
5 but not nearly such awful pot as I read in the journals;  
6 I have an honesty self-born of whores and hospitals  
7 that will not allow me to pretend to be  
8 something which I am not---  
9 which is a double failure: the failure of people  
10 in poetry  
11 and the failure of people  
12 in life.

13 and when you fail in poetry  
14 you fail life,  
15 and when you fail life  
16 you were never born  
17 no matter what the statistics  
18 or what your mother named you.

19 the grandstands are crowded with the dead  
20 screaming for a winner  
21 wanting a number to carry them over  
22 into living,  
23 but it is not as easy as that---  
24 just as with the poem:  
25 if you are dead  
26 you might as well be buried  
27 and throw the typewriter away  
28 and stop fooling with  
29 poems horses women life:  
30 you are cluttering up  
31 the exits---  
32 so get out fast  
33 and desist from the  
34 precious few  
35 pages.

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Bukowski, Charles: Seahorse [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I own the ticks on a horse  
2 I own his belly and balls  
3 I own this  
4 the way his eyes roll  
5 the way he eats hay  
6 and shits and  
7 stands up asleep

8 he is mine  
9 this machine  
10 like a blue train I used to play with  
11 when my hands were smaller

12 and my mind better

13 I own this horse,  
14 someday I will ride my horse  
15 down all the streets  
16 past the trees we will go  
17 up the mountain  
18 down the valley

19 ticks and eyes and balls  
20 the both of us  
21 we will go to where kings eat  
22 dandelions  
23 in the giant sea  
24 where thinking is not terror  
25 where eyes do not go out  
26 like Saturday night children

27 the horse I own and the myself I own  
28 will become blue and nice and clean  
29 again

30 and I will get off and  
31 wait for you.

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Bukowski, Charles: I Have Lived in England [from The Rooming House Madrigals:  
Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I have lived in England  
2 and I have lived in hell,  
3 but perhaps there is nothing quite so horrible  
4 as picking up the latest literary review  
5 filled with the latest literary darlings;  
6 K. teaches at L.; M. has a second volume of  
7 poems coming out; O. has been published  
8 in the leading journals; S. has won a  
9 scholarship to Paris---

10 and you hold the pages up  
11 to the overhead light  
12 and still  
13 nothing comes through.

14 it is a puzzle indeed,  
15 far more a puzzle than when a 90-to-one shot  
16 leaps through at the last moment  
17 along the rail.

18 a horse can live.

19 and, indeed, do you expect to find  
20 poetry  
21 in a poetry review?

22 things are not that  
23 simple.

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Bukowski, Charles: Farewell, Foolish Objects [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I have lain in bed all day  
2 but I have written one poem  
3 and I am up now  
4 looking out the window  
5 and like a novelist might say  
6 drunk: the clouds are coming at me  
7 like scullery maids with dishpans  
8 in their hands---  
9 something that holds gritty dirty  
10 water.  
11 but I am a drunken non-novelist  
12 but in clear condition now  
13 here sits the bottle of beer  
14 and I am warmly thinking  
15 in a kind of foam-shaped idle fancy  
16 working closely

17 but all I can stoke up are  
18 squares and circles which  
19 do not fit; so  
20 messeigneurs  
21 I will tell you the truth:  
22 again (in bed)  
23 I read another article on D. Thomas &  
24 some day I will get lucky and sit around  
25 and own a French horn and a tame eagle  
26 and I will sit on the porch all day  
27 a white porch always in the sun  
28 one of those white porches with green  
29 vines all around, and  
30 I will read about Dylan and D.H. until  
31 my eyes fall out of my head for eagle  
32 meat and I will play the French horn  
33 blind. but even now it gets darker  
34 the evening thing into night  
35 the bones down here

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36 the stars up there  
37 somebody rattling the springs in  
38 Denver so another pewker can be born.  
39 I think everything is a sheet of sun  
40 and the best of everything  
41 is myself walking through it  
42 wondering about the pure nerve  
43 of the life-thing going on:  
44 after the jails the hospitals  
45 the factories the good dogs  
46 the brainless butterflies.  
47 but now I am back at the window  
48 there is an opera on the radio  
49 and a woman sits in a chair to my left  
50 saying over and over again:  
51 BRATCH BRATSHT BRAATCHT!  
52 and she is holding a book in her hand:  
53 How to Learn Russian Easily.  
54 but there is really nothing you can do  
55 easily: live or die or accept fame  
56 or money or defeat, it's all hard.  
57 the opera says this, the dead birds  
58 the dead countries the dead loves  
59 the man shot because somebody thought  
60 he was an elk  
61 the elk shot because somebody thought  
62 it was an elk.  
63 all the pure nerve of going on



64 this woman wanting to speak Russian  
65 myself wanting to get drunk  
66 but we need something to eat.  
67 GRIND CAT GRIND MEAT says  
68 the woman in Russian so I figure  
69 she's hungry, we haven't eaten  
70 in a couple of hours. CLAM  
71 BAYONET TURKEY PORK  
72 AND PORK she says, and I walk  
73 over and put on my pants and

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74 I am going out to get something.  
75 the forests are far away and I am  
76 no good with the bow and arrow  
77 and somebody sings on the radio:  
78 "farewell, foolish objects."  
79 and all I can do is walk into a grocery  
80 store and pull out a wallet and hope  
81 that it's loaded. and this is  
82 about how I waste my Sundays.  
83 the rest of the week gets better  
84 because there is somebody telling  
85 me what to do  
86 and although it seems madness  
87 almost everybody is doing it  
88 whatever it is.  
89 so now if you will excuse me  
90 (she is eating an orange now)  
91 I will put on my shoes and shirt  
92 and get out of here---it'll  
93 be better for  
94 all of us.

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Bukowski, Charles: A Report Upon the Consumption of Myself [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I am a panther shut up and bellowing in  
2 cement walls, and I am angry at blue  
3 evenings without ventilation  
4 and I am angry with you, and it will come  
5 like a rose

6 it will come like a man walking through fire  
7 it will shine like an unseen trumpet in a trunk  
8 the eyes will smell like sausages  
9 the feet will have small propellers  
10 and I will hold you in Bayonne and  
11 the sailors will smile  
12 my heart like something cut away from  
13 cancer will feel and beat again feel  
14 and beat again---but now  
15 the blue evening is cinched like old  
16 muskets and the dangling sex rope hangs  
17 as the tree stands up and calls:  
18 July. the dust of hope in the bottom of paper cups  
19 along with small spiders that have names like ancient  
20 European cities; spit and dross, heavy wheels;  
21 oilwells stuck between fish and sucking up the grey gas  
22 of love and the palms up on the cliff waving  
23 waving in the warm yellow light  
24 as I walk into a drugstore to buy toothpaste,  
25 rubbers, photographs of frogs, a copy of the latest  
26 Consumer Reports (50 cents) for I consume and  
27 am consumed and would like to know  
28 on this blue evening  
29 just which razorblade it would be best for me  
30 to use, or maybe I could get a station wagon or buy a  
31 stereo or a movie camera, say 8mm, under \$55  
32 or an electric frying pan ... like the silver head  
33 of some god-thing after they drop the bomb BANG  
34 and the grass gives up and love is a shadow  
35 and love is a fishtail weaving through

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36 threads that seem eyes but are only what's  
37 left of me on the last blue evening after the bands  
38 have suicided out, the carnival has left town and  
39 they've blown up the Y.W.C.A. like a giant balloon and  
40 sent it out to sea full of screaming lovely lonely  
41 girls.

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1 Now it's Borodin ... 4:18 a.m.,  
2 symphony #2,  
3 the gas is on  
4 but the masses still sleep  
5 except the bastard  
6 downstairs  
7 who always has the light on  
8 all night, he yawns all night  
9 and sleeps all day,  
10 he's either a madman  
11 or a poet; and has an  
12 ugly wife,  
13 neither of them work  
14 and we pass each other  
15 on the steps (the wife and I)  
16 when we go down  
17 to dump our bottles,  
18 and I look at his name  
19 on the mailbox: Fleg  
20 God. No wonder. A fleg  
21 never sleeps. Some kind  
22 of fish-thing waiting  
23 for a twist in the sky.  
24 but very kind, I must  
25 remember, when the  
26 drunk women up here  
27 scream or throw things  
28 Fleg ignores it all,  
29 yawns, and this is  
30 fine. There used to be  
31 an Anderson, a Chester  
32 Anderson always at my door  
33 in his pants  
34 and undershirt,  
35 red-eyed as a woman

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36 who has lost a lover,  
37 manager behind his shoulder  
38 (and one night 2 cops),  
39 "God, I can't sleep.  
40 I'm a working man,  
41 I've got to get my sleep  
42 Jesus. I can't SLEEP."

43 Fleg? Sleep? I've never even  
44 seen him. I don't think

45 he does anything. Just some  
46 kind of shoulder of mutton  
47 with silver eyes  
48 looking up at his ceiling,

49 tiredly smiling,  
50 saying softly to his  
51 ugly wife: "That Bukowski  
52 up there, he's a kick  
53 for sore balls, ain't he?"

54 "Now, Honey, don't talk that way."

55 "He had a colored woman up there  
56 the other night. I can tell,  
57 I can tell."

58 "Now, Mission, you can't tell no  
59 such damn thing."

60 (Mission? Mission Fleg. Christ.)

61 "Yes, I can. I heard her screaming."

62 "Screaming?"

63 "Well, moaning, kind of like you  
64 know. What's this guy look like,  
65 baby?"

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66 "Passed him today. Face kind of smashed  
67 in. A long nose like an ant-eater.  
68 Mouth like a monkey. Kind of funny eyes.  
69 Never saw eyes like those."

70 It's about 4:38 a.m. Borodin is finished (yeah)  
71 not a very long symphony. I turn my radio down

72 and the Flegs I find  
73 are listening  
74 to the same station.

75 I hope we never meet,  
76 I like Fleg the way he is  
77 (in my mind)  
78 and I'm sure he wants me  
79 the way I am  
80 (in his mind),  
81 and he has just yawned now  
82 up through the ceiling  
83 his ceiling  
84 which is my floor; ah,  
85 my poor tired Fleg  
86 waiting for me to give  
87 him LIFE;  
88 he's probably slowly dying of  
89 something  
90 and I am too,  
91 but I'm so glad  
92 he doesn't call the police  
93 while I'm  
94 at it.

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Bukowski, Charles: Interviewed by a Guggenheim Recipient [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 this South American up here on a Gugg  
2 walked in with his whore  
3 and she sat on the edge of my bed and  
4 crossed her fine legs  
5 and I kept looking at her legs  
6 and he pulled at his stringy necktie  
7 and I had a hangover  
8 and he asked me  
9 **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE AMERICAN**  
10 **POETS?**  
11 and I told him I didn't think very much  
12 of the American poets  
13 and then he went on to ask some other  
14 very dull questions

15 (as his whore's legs layed along the side of  
16 my brain) like  
17 WELL? YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING  
18 BUT IF YOU WERE TEACHING A CLASS AND ONE OF THE  
19 STUDENTS ASKED YOU WHICH AMERICAN POETS  
20 THEY SHOULD READ  
21 WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?  
22 she crossed her legs as I watched and I thought  
23 I could knock him out with one punch  
24 rape her in 4 minutes  
25 catch a train for L.A.  
26 get off in Arizona and walk off into the desert  
27 and I couldn't tell him that I would never teach  
28 a class  
29 that along with not liking American poetry  
30 that I didn't like American classes either  
31 or the job that they would expect me to  
32 do,  
33 so I said  
34 Whitman, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence's poems about  
35 reptiles and beasts, Auden. and then I

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36 realized that Whitman was the only true American,  
37 that Eliot was not an American somehow and the  
38 others certainly not, and  
39 he knew it too  
40 he knew that I had fucked up  
41 but I made no apologies  
42 thought some more about rape  
43 I almost loved the woman but I knew that when she walked out  
44 that I would never see her again  
45 and we shook hands and the Gugg said  
46 he'd send me the article when it came out  
47 but I knew that he didn't have an article  
48 and he knew it too  
49 and then he said  
50 I will send you some of my poems translated into  
51 English  
52 and I said fine  
53 and I watched them walk out of the place  
54 I watched her highheels clack down the tall  
55 green steps  
56 and then both of them were gone  
57 but I kept remembering her dress sliding all over her  
58 like a second skin  
59 and I was wild with mourning and love and sadness  
60 and being a fool unable to  
61 communicate

62 anything  
63 and I walked in and finished that beer  
64 cracked another  
65 put on my ragged king's coat  
66 and walked out into the New Orleans street  
67 and that very night  
68 I sat with my friends and acted vile and  
69 the ass  
70 much mouth and villainy  
71 and cruelty  
72 and they never  
73 knew why.

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Bukowski, Charles: Very [from *The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I take the taxi to Newport and study the wrinkles in the  
2 driver's skull; all anticipation is gone:  
3 defeat has come so often  
4 (like rain)  
5 that it has assumed more meaning  
6 than victory; the player is good at  
7 the piano  
8 and we wait in a corner  
9 (this poet!)  
10 waiting to recite  
11 poems; it's like a cave here:  
12 full of bats and whores  
13 and bodiless music  
14 moving at the back of the world; my head aches,  
15 and seeking a deliberate door  
16 I think gently of successful papa Haydn  
17 rotting in the rainy garden  
18 above copulating  
19 tone-deaf gophers ...

20 the sun is in a box somewhere  
21 asleep like a cat;  
22 the bats flit, a body  
23 takes my hand (the one with the drink:  
24 the right hand is the drinker)

25 a woman, a horrible  
26 damned woman,  
27 something alive  
28 sits  
29 and blinks  
30 at me:  
31 Hank, it says,  
32 they want you up  
33 front!  
34 fuck 'em, I say, fuck 'em.

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35 I have grown quite fat and  
36 vulgar (a deliberate death  
37 on the kitchen floor) and  
38 suddenly I laugh  
39 at my excellent condition  
40 like some swine of a businessman  
41 and I don't even feel  
42 like getting up  
43 to piss ...

44 Angels,  
45 we have grown apart.

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Bukowski, Charles: The Look: [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I once bought a toy rabbit  
2 at a department store  
3 and now he sits and ponders  
4 me with pink sheer eyes:

5 He wants golfballs and glass  
6 walls.  
7 I want quiet thunder.

8 Our disappointment sits between us.



Bukowski, Charles: One Night Stand [from The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1       the latest sleeping on my pillow catches  
2       window lamplight through the mist of alcohol.

3       I was the whelp, the prude who shook when  
4       the wind shook blades of grass the eye could see  
5       and  
6       you were a  
7       convent girl watching the nuns shake loose  
8       the Las Cruces sand from God's robes

9       you are  
10       yesterday's  
11       bouquet so sadly  
12       raided, I kiss your poor  
13       breasts as my hands reach for love  
14       in this cheap Hollywood apartment smelling of  
15       bread and gas and misery.

16       we move through remembered routes  
17       the same old steps smooth with hundreds of  
18       feet, 50 loves, 20 years.  
19       and we are granted a very small summer, and  
20       then it's  
21       winter again  
22       and you are moving across the floor  
23       some heavy awkward thing  
24       and the toilet flushes, a dog barks  
25       a car door slams ...  
26       it's gotten inescapably away, everything,  
27       it seems, and I light a cigarette and  
28       await the oldest curse  
29       of all.

Bukowski, Charles: Poem to a Most Affectionate Lady [from The Rooming House  
Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black Sparrow Press]

1 Please keep your icecream hands  
2 for the leopard,  
3 please keep your knees  
4 out of my nuts;  
5 if women must love me  
6 I ask them also  
7 to cook me sauerkraut dinners  
8 and leave me time  
9 for games of gold  
10 in the mind,  
11 and time for sleep  
12 or scratching  
13 or rolling upon my side  
14 like any tired bull  
15 in any tired meadow.

16 love is not a candle  
17 burning down---  
18 life is,  
19 and love and life are  
20 not the same  
21 or else  
22 love having choice  
23 nobody would ever die.

24 which means? which means:  
25 let loose a moment  
26 your hand upon my center---  
27 I've done you well  
28 like any scrabby plant  
29 upon a mountain, so  
30 please be kind enough  
31 to die for an hour]  
32 or 2,  
33 or at least

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34 take time

35 to turn the  
36 sauerkraut.

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Bukowski, Charles: Parts of an Opera, Parts of a Guitar, Part of Nowhere [from  
The Rooming House Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966 (1988), Black  
Sparrow Press]

1 I don't know, it was raining and I had fallen down  
2 somewhere but I seemed to have money so it didn't  
3 matter, and I went into the opera to dry off, and it  
4 was opening night and everybody was dressed and  
5 trying  
6 to act very polite and educated but I saw a lot of  
7 guys there mean as hell, I don't mean mean enough  
8 to be  
9 a Dillinger but mean enough to be successful in  
10 business and their wives were all tone deaf  
11 and even the people hollering in the opera  
12 were not enjoying it but hollering because it was the  
13 thing to do, like wearing bermudas in the summer, and  
14 I thought, I'll never write an opera because they'll  
15 walk all over it, and I walked out  
16 and phoned a gal I knew from South Philly and she met  
17 me on Olvera Street and we went into a fancy place  
18 and ate and drank and this big female kept  
19

